Reflection on Creation from Elaine Prevallet SL: 13th October 2021 Sr Marie

Opening words: This week, we have a transcript. We have attached some pictures/ resources to help you in your meditation. If you are meditating alone but would like to feel 'with us' we meditate at 7.30pm on Wednesday in the Wisdom Centre. The tradition we meditate in is Centring Prayer which is fully inclusive of all traditions of Christian Meditation and welcoming of World Traditions.

Welcome to Christian Meditation in the Centring Prayer Tradition: A very warm welcome from Fiona, Marie, Rob, Hazel and Paul, the leaders of the Christian Meditation group at Wisdom Centre, Romsey. The whole session is about 50 minutes. We meditate beginning with an opening prayer followed by reflections and then 25 minutes of silence. We hope you enjoy your meditation with us.

Opening Prayer: *Eternal God,* through our meditation may the ears of our hearts be attentive to your Word. May we seek and find You. Awakened to Your presence may we be joyful, embodying peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-awareness. May we follow Your teaching, seeking also, the wisdom of the Holy Fathers and Mothers. May we, therefore, commit to community, love of earth, peace and justice making. **Amen**

Introduction These days we are coming up to COP26 in Glasgow, an enormous event for our country, our world and indeed for the whole universe. Maybe you have had enough of it all on tv, radio, social media. This meditation is not more of the same but the WHY of our concern. It is a meditation written by a sister some time ago which is very relevant for today. She helps us reflect by using an abundance of question. Elaine writes:
Can you remember a moment when you first became aware of Earth as our "home planet", a very small, round, and very vulnerable object in an infinity of black space, and realised that we humans are essentially earthlings"? Can you remember when you first began to understand the implications of the fact that the roundness of the planet inevitably means that everything is in touch with everything else, and that there is no "away" to throw anything? Was it a sudden realization, or was it a slowly dawning awareness, cultivated by gazing at the icon of Earth viewed from outer space?



To astronaut James Irwin, Earth looked like a Christmas tree ornament; to Edgar Mitchell, it was "a sparkling blue and white jewel, a small pearl in a thick sea of black mystery. It takes more than a moment," he said, "to fully realise this is Earth…home" With the venture into space, our collective perception would inevitably change: Earth is now our home planet, home to all of us, the whole earth community. The astronauts spoke of seeing national boundaries disappear, and it was true: do not "nations" begin to seem like temporary and very arbitrary arrangements, and do not wars and battles over boundaries and "property rights" seem strangely out of place? Who owns anything, after all, doesn't it all belong to all of us? For me, each moment of new awareness has been like pushing the re-format button on the computer, when everything on the screen shifts and re-arranges itself. Something like that happened in our minds when we saw Earth from outer space, and the process has only begun.

Let's reflect on our sense of scale, both space and time. Imagine a time before the telescope, when there was only the naked eye to tell us the measure of the universe. Now with all the technical means we have of extending our vision, we know that planet Earth is just one relatively small planet shining amid two hundred billion stars in our galaxy. We know that our galaxy, the Milky Way, is only one of the smaller, less impressive galaxies amid a hundred billion other galaxies about which we know hardly anything. How has that

awareness affected your sense of who we are? Does it make you feel small? Does it inspire in you a kind of reverence and humility in the face of the cosmos? Or does it frame in a new way a sense of awe and responsibility as a conscious being on this particularly tiny little speck of Earth, because, in the presence of such enormity, you are able to be aware of it, to think about it and marvel at it? When you know how tiny Earth is, and we ourselves mere specks of dust, does it give you a sense of how precious this bit of creation is, its varied and magnificent life forms and how we're all together, floating here in space, depending on each other for our lives?



And knowing that, after the big bang, it has taken the planet 15 billion years to be formed, including 4 billion years for life to develop to where it is now: what does that do to your sense of age? And knowing that some variety of the human species has been around for some 200,000 years: how does that affect your sense of time, we humans with a life-span such that we call someone 'old' at 80 or 90 years? Might that kind of perspective instil in you a sense of cosmic patience, recognising that you are part of an enormous process? Does it boggle your mind to think that we have begun to destroy what Earth, carefully and with much pain, much trial and error, has been working to develop for, depending on where you start, 200,000 years or 4, or 15 billion years? Do you feel overwhelmed by that scale; does it create a sense that really in the face of such enormity one individual can't make much difference? Or rather, does it inspire a kind of awe at your own privilege to be allowed to participate in the process, along with a sense of reverence and care for its continuance?

Sometimes when you're walking along, do you try to imagine yourself as one infinitesimally small creature walking on top of an orb spinning in space at unthinkable speed, with only gravity keeping your feet anchored to Earth? If it weren't for gravity you'd go flying off in space as less than a speck of dust! Do you recognize gravity as an elemental form of love, "a welling up of an inescapable togetherness of things," as Brian Swimme describes it? The attraction of molecules for one another, or as some physicists now describe it, the sympathetic vibration of strings is also an elemental form of love. Do you recognise that as evidence that the whole of creation is penetrated at its very roots with a dynamism toward unity? We might think of gravity holding all of us on Earth together in an embrace of love, and doesn't that speak of a God who is, essentially, relational, wanting to draw all things together in love?

Or as Brian Swimme suggests, imagine that, given a round planet spinning in space, when you look up to the stars in the night sky you might well be looking down! When you realize that the sun isn't coming up or going down, but that we are hurtling into or out of its warmth and light, how would you re-name a 'sunrise' or 'sunset'? Swimme describes the planer this way: "a gorgeous living Earth drifts light as a feather around the great roaring generosity of the Sun."

If the sun were not "generous" in spilling out its energy of light and heat, and if Earth were not on track at just this particular distance in relation to the sun, regularly and predictably following its course, nothing would grow, nothing could live. Life would either be burned to ashes or freeze to death. Do you appreciate how enormous the odds are against the exactly right conditions for life to develop?

When you think of your own body, your own life, are you aware that every life comes from life, or more accurately, from many lives? You came not just from one single pair of male and female begetters, but from a whole line of lives, going from parents, grandparents, great grandparents, way back coming from ape like ancestors who came from primitive mammals, who came from reptiles, from amphibians, from fish, from jelly fish, from clumps of cells. Each of which has been able to live because of all the systems that sustain it. Do you appreciate all these forebears, realizing that you carry in your body and psyche remnants of their existence? Do you realise that each of us is re-cycled stuff, newly formed into this particular combination; that genes have been at work reproducing and communicating, sending information to next generations, networking, recycling, sharing: does that awareness give you a different sense of the enormous complexity of the process which led to your being you? Or, if you remember that you started with one egg cell, chosen from among 400,000 others in your mother's ovaries, which met with one of the hundreds of millions of

sperm cells produced each day by your father: are you in awe at the improbability that you would be precisely and uniquely who you are? And do you feel overwhelming gratitude to the whole community of the Earth that has been labouring, for eons of time, to bring you into being and keep you alive? Does the whole of this enormous vista bring you to a profound speechlessness when you try to imagine God? Does it enlarge by unimaginable proportions your perspective on how much mystery is contained in the word Creator?

Have you begun to appreciate in some concrete way the fact that the interaction between our human activity and Earth's other life systems, including climate and landscape, alters, either for good or for ill, the continual unfolding of life's processes on the planet? Has that awareness changed any of your behaviours or habits? When you breathe or eat or drink are you aware that you are receiving, and that your life depends upon, an unimaginable number of "free services": micro-organisms for instance, working in the soil to make it fertile; wind and birds and bees pollinating plants and crops, water that re-cycles itself? You are completely dependent on these processes and they are done for you freely by all the rest of Earth's species. Have you found some ways to cultivate awareness and gratitude for what you receive at every moment? At each stage, life's development incorporated but continues to depend upon what has gone before. We are radically dependent upon the cooperation of other species, species we like to think of as "lower on the rung" than we are. But in truth we are undeniably vulnerable, dependent on other species in quite particular ways for our own life's continuance. We are, essentially, members of the community of life on Earth. Has that awareness penetrated your being and has it changed you?



Now we begin to understand that nature is not "our environment". We humans are not separate from nature: we **are** nature, after billions of years of ongoing transformation, expressing itself now in the form which we call human on this planet Earth. Every action, every breath we draw even every single thought we think, has an impact on the world around us.

We human beings are miniscule in the face of the enormity of the universe. We are unbelievably precious, gifted with life and consciousness which the Creator has nurtured into being on planet Earth. If we have allowed this awareness to enter not just our minds but our whole body –self, we must have changed radically in the last two or three decades.

This change is not just a question of theory, or learning that stays in our heads, of "facts" that we read about. The crisis of our times requires that we consciously work at re-orienting and re-imaging ourselves, integrating these understandings into the totality of our lives. There are lots of ways to do it. Sometimes we can start with behaviours and through changing our behaviour, we can change the way we think. Our intuition, our willingness to patiently learn a different pattern of communication and communion with Earth will be involved. In our fast-moving society, with our addiction to quick results, entranced as we are with technology, we have difficulty coming to any depth of relationship, even with other human beings. We've lost touch with the basic ways of communication, and we've lost our feel for connection with Earth. But the capacity is within us, and it is recoverable.

Do an inventory of some of those self-understandings. Examine how much of it is still only "head" knowledge; check to see whether the sense of relationship has changed. Ask yourself what former presuppositions need to be changed. See what steps you can take to deepen your appreciation for your own life as the gift of the Creator through the cooperation of planet Earth

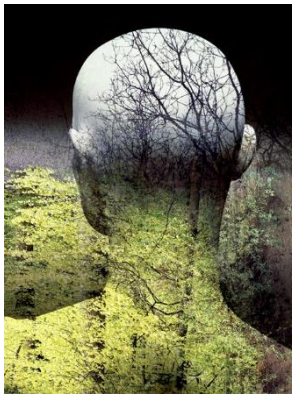
Beginning Meditation:
Each of us is invited to enter into the depths of him/herself, to journey to the place where emptiness and abundance touch and embrace. Let us try to proceed, little by little, as far as the centre of our own being, which is, at the same time, the centre of everything that surrounds us. Here we rest in absolute silence... From this deep centre we begin to feel within ourselves how closely we are united with the Earth. Because one and the same creation is the origin of our Earth and of ourselves, all things are tightly bound to one another. The connection and the contact are very deep and real, but we have to make the effort to go very

deep within ourselves in order to become truly aware of its existence. In this way we enter into « sacred space », the Temple of Creation. Like Moses, we will be moved to « take off our shoes » because the ground upon which we are treading is holy ground. The whole of creation is filled with God's creative presence, glory, and love. We sense very deeply our utter dependence, our littleness, and our neediness. We come to realize that our very existence depends on someone or something outside ourselves. But at the same time we sense how magnificent we are in the eyes of God. We come to know in the depths of our being, Wisdom, creating and sustaining us, penetrating all creation, and dwelling within all that exists.

25-minute meditation begins

Post meditation:
In reality there is a single integral community of the Earth that includes all its component members whether human or other than human. In this community every being has its own role to fulfil, its own dignity, its inner spontaneity. Every being has its own voice. Every being declares itself to the entire universe. Every being enters into communion with other beings. This capacity for relatedness, for presence to other beings, for spontaneity in action, is a capacity possessed by every mode of being throughout the entire universe. Thomas Berry

We belong to the earth
We belong to the earth,
we all belong to the earth.
It's not that she belongs to us,
it's we belong to her, it's we belong to her.



A strand in a web are we, a strand in a web I believe.
To own it we cannot dare to dream, it's a web that we didn't weave,
It's a web that we didn't weave.

In sun and in wind and in rain, is a seed of what will be.
It awakens the power that grows down below, courses through you and through me,
It courses through you and through me.

And when our spirits take flight, we lay our bodies down,
Our ashes may be carried away on the wind but
Return to the birthing ground, return to the birthing ground.

Closing prayer: Loving and Eternal God, we thank you for the gifts of prayer, meditation and contemplation. We thank you for being with us and for this community. May we, therefore, pray with all others, as one community, one world and one spirit to One God…Take some time for your personal prayer …**Amen**

Thank you for meditating with us, please join us again soon.

Resources: Elaine M Prevallet SL *In the Service of Life*
Brian Swimme and Thomas Berry, *The Universe Story*
Images from Pixabay
Song https://music.youtube.com/watch?v=JQFd9q4GZTE&feature=share



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